

## *Meet The Real McCoy*



**T**his week's cover story obviously isn't about a club member. Rather, it's about the most important Corvette ever. Ever. It's so important that it has a name. This is the '57 Corvette known as *The Real McCoy*. And it's the reason we all have Corvettes in our garages. Were it not for this car, GM would have dropped production of Corvettes and they would have been but a footnote in automotive history – a story of what might have been if only...

**But first things first. When the first Corvette went on display at the '53 Motorama exhibit at the New York Auto Show, Robert McClean's team offered up a spectacular little sports car which owed a lot of its vision from Harley Earl's Jaguar XK 120. Like in The Who's *Tommy*, "...and the crowd went crazy!" GM execs went back to Detroit with handfuls of advance orders and letters of interest. Harley Earl's dream now left tire tracks in the snow. In the amazing time of six months, Corvettes hit the showrooms. But all was not well in Corvetteland. The target price was to be mid-sedan, about \$2,000. The price on the windshields was \$3,498, nearly 75% above the target. Under the hood lurked the trusty old 235 cu. in. GM truck engine, the Blue Flame 6. Even with exhaust headers and three dual-choke side-draft carbs, the output was a wimpy 150 hp. Harnessed to a two-speed automatic, its 0 - 60 mph time was 11.5 seconds. Slow for even the '50s. Other features, like no outside door handle nor side windows which meant the side curtain couldn't keep the rain out any better than my old Triumph Spitfire, turned away many folks who walked in with a lot of fire in their hearts. The only two options were a heater and AM radio. Fit and finish of the fiberglass panels just plain sucked. But it did have a first for American production cars - a tachometer! Production in that first year was only 315 cars. Unchanged for '54, but now built in St. Louis instead of a hacked-out line in Flint, the as-delivered price was down slightly to \$3,254, still more costly than two of GM's cheapest cars. Production through the full year reached 3,640, about half of what was hoped for. In 1955 something big happened under the hood - the famous Chevy small block 265 cu. in. V-8 was stuffed in there, but still mated to the 2 speed automatic. The new engine brought a 0 - 60 time of 8.5 seconds. Suddenly, the Chevy could jump up and run with the big dogs! Horsepower was 195, and they even did this with a remarkable reduction of price to \$2,909. They added outside door handles and roll-up side windows with the unheard-of sports car option of power windows. However, production was only 700 cars. There was a lot of inventory of '54 Corvettes in the lots and great wringing of the hands of the dealers who mostly didn't want these things on their floor plan.**

**Now, over in the Ford house, the Thunderbird had just hit the streets. They sold like hotcakes on a winter morning. They put on new shifts to keep up with demand and produced over 16,000 in the first year. The sad Chevy dealers wished they had something like it. The Thunderbird was never intended to be a sports car, rather it was a personal performance coupe. Dealers thought the Corvette missed the market and complained loudly. Harley Earl had his halo badly tarnished in the executive floors at home office, and the accountants started looking at the money they would save without the Corvette anchor around their necks. Also in 1955 a Russian engineer finally wrangled his way into the Corvette team - spotlight on stage center please - and into the light strode Zora Arkus-Duntov. He knew in Europe that sports cars were sold during the weekends on the race tracks. He got permission from a near-desperate Earl to build a bit of a hot rod and see how fast it would go. They had already agreed to stick a manual 3-speed behind the V-8 and up its power to 210 hp for '56. That was a good foundation for Zora's hot rod. He developed a new camshaft which had a lower lift, to keep the valves from floating at high revs, but with longer durations. That, combined with a higher**

**compression ratio brought power for the 265 to a very respectable 255 hp. This was when Ferrari, Jaguar and Maserati were just approaching 1 hp per cubic inch in their race engines. Pretty impressive stuff from Detroit! Zora took his car to the Daytona Speed Week and on the beach took that little car to a two-way average speed of just over 150 mph. On the sand. The same car hit over 165 on the pavement during earlier tests at their Phoenix test track. Again maestro - "...and the crowd went crazy!" GM's top execs could look out their windows and see possibilities for the Corvette. And then the automotive publications started whispering about what America was able to do against the best from Europe.**



But Zora wasn't through with his little hot rod. In the after-glow of Daytona he got permission to go road racing at the '57 Sebring 12 hour race – America's longest and most prestigious race at the time. Zora and Chevy weren't the first to bring a Corvette to Sebring, though. In '56 a fairly large number of private owners brought their new 283, 3-speed Vettes to Sebring. An amazing 14 of them passed away during the first hour of the 12 hour race due to "drive train issues". Mostly blown engines, a few trannies and rear-ends. This was the first time that Corvettes on the race course were affectionately referred to as "The Fiberglass Flock". Obviously stock Corvettes weren't up to the rigors of racing and that was a black eye in the motoring press Chevy execs didn't like. The program was still dangling by a thread and the accountant's balance sheets and cash flow statements were on their desks. In '57, Corvettes looked a lot like the '56s but the engine was punched out to the famous high-revving 'rock-em sock-em 283. After the '56 Sebring, Zora was able to get GM to put in the great Borg-Warner T-10 4-speed and they "manned-up" the rear end. New suspension geometry gave even better handling and precise steering at speed. That little hot rod in the corner of Zora's private work area got a thorough breathing-upon. The engine was bored and stroked to over 300 cu. in. and output was over 300 hp. Autolight even developed special "test" spark plugs to keep the engine revving to 6,500 rpm. That car was entered in the May 23<sup>rd</sup> Sebring 12 hour endurance race which was then in its sixth year and truly an important world-wide event with official team entries from Ferrari, Jaguar, Maserati, Lotus, Porsche and others. Because of its modifications, Zora's car was entered in the tough B-production class. Two other stock Corvettes with 283 engines and 3-speeds were brought to battle the prestigious GP class for stock production cars. This race also unveiled a full-on racing prototype aimed to winning the 24 hours of Lemans, the SS. The legendary Juan Manuel Fangio drove it and in three laps destroyed the outright lap record by nearly 3 seconds. His team-mate, Stirling Moss got to within a half-second of Fangio's time, and the press went wild that an American car held the track record in the face of the best from Europe. The car only lasted 3 hours when a simple rubber bushing in the rear suspension let go forcing its early retirement, but the curtain on GM's ban to go racing against the very best was lifted. Of the stock Corvettes, the little hot rod finished an amazing 9<sup>th</sup> overall against all the sports-racing cars and won the B-production class by miles. The first GT car finished 12<sup>th</sup> and won that class, with the second car second in class and 15<sup>th</sup> overall.

Now, GM was able to sell Corvettes based on their sexy showroom and street presence, their now-classic V-8 sound, and their proven world-class performance. Sound familiar? It's a persona and presence that hasn't changed over the years in spite of all the change the car and the world has experienced. And we get to enjoy that heritage today because of Zora's little hot rod. There was a Chevy ad showing Zora's car at the end of the race, all bruised up and dirty from 12 hours of hard racing with the words, "The Real McCoy" over the top. And that is what this car has been known by ever since. If it weren't for this car from the mind of Zora Arkus-Duntov and the sometimes overt help, sometimes looking-the-other-way Harley Earl... well, I don't want to think about it. Life's just too good in my Vette. As I write this, I'm about to hit the road for 3 weeks with my wife in our Vette. It's a beautiful car. It's powerful, it's got awesome brakes and can out-handle about any challenge we'll likely see – even the famous *Tail of the Dragon* in eastern Tennessee.



I'll bring back pictures. I'll be smiling – thanks to The Real McCoy.

# Brian's Song

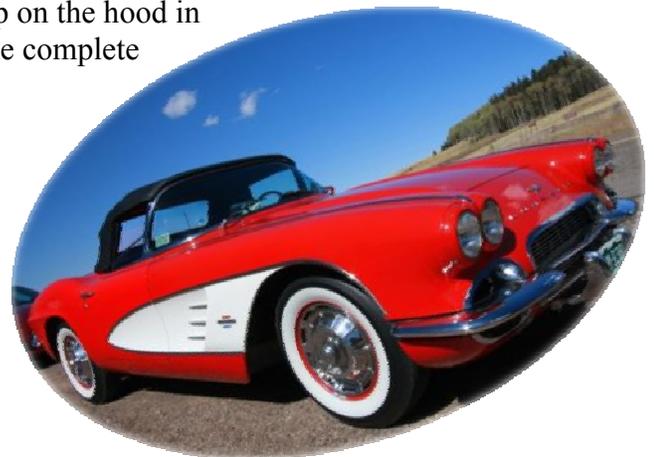
I had wanted a Corvette since I was about 13 years old, and my mother was driving on Highway 50 in upstate New York, in a fairly congested area, and we were following one. We were coming up on a major light and it turned yellow, and the Corvette ahead of us was pretty close to the intersection, so he stepped on the gas to go ahead and get through. I watched the rear end of the car squat down when he hit the gas, and thought: "I like that a lot better than the station wagon I'm in".

I was considering building a Shelby kit car, but this was in the dark ages when you needed a machine shop to assemble one. I always liked the 1961 model because it is the only first-generation version that has the "ducktail" rear end (the more modern looking version), but you can still paint the coves a contrasting color from the body. (Note: when I bought my car the coves actually matched the body color, and it actually looked a lot more modern that way. I eventually got some cracking in the body panel, and while getting it fixed by Rik and his dad, decided to go ahead and paint the coves on my car white. It was quite a shock when I saw it: it now looks 20 years older in design.)

I started looking for a suitable Corvette, and found that it is very hard to find a 1961. I went to a car show in Denver and met some very friendly people, including a gentleman by the name of Reed Merrit who was going out to the Bloomington Gold show along with a bunch of people. Rooms near the show are at a premium, but he said if I didn't mind sleeping on the couch I could come for free. I wasn't going to pass that up. (He actually drove his 1967 - 427 out to the show, re-jetted the carburetors, and let me drive it on a frontage road. All I can say is, down at sea level, the whole front end of the car lifts up about a foot to a foot and a half, and twists from the torque.)

I tried buying my car at the show, but wasn't willing to pay as much as the seller wanted. I actually saw him as the show field was clearing out, with another guy trying to buy the car. He called me about two weeks later at home and said that he would go ahead and sell the car at my price if I was interested in coming and getting it. I flew out, we did the transaction at the bank, and I drove it home from out-of-state. I knew virtually nothing about the car, but it ran fine, although there was a huge thunderstorm that literally stopped traffic around LaJunta, and I didn't know enough to close that big old air vent up on the hood in front of the windshield until I felt water coming in on my leg. The complete lack of technology in the car makes it rock-solid reliable.

By no technology I mean: drum brakes all around, with no power assist; no power steering (that is why the steering wheel is so big); no ball joints in the front end (they are kingpins, similar to 1950s pickup trucks); a dual point distributor; a generator (not an alternator) with a cable to drive the tachometer; air conditioning - you have got to be kidding; dual WCFB carburetors that weigh about 18 pounds apiece; and it is a solid lifter car with a four speed and positraction.



I love the new cars, and their technology, and they are certainly a lot more drivable. However, this old car certainly gets a lot of attention at car shows from people who either remember them, or don't really know what it is, which is a lot of fun.

Brian



## My earliest childhood memory:

The year was 1974, I was 3 years old. My father was in the process of completely restoring his first Corvette, a 1962 later to become candy apple red. He had just finished getting the engine working. Mom was working, so my older sister by 2 1/2 years and I went along for the maiden voyage. We had to sit on a milk crate, since there were no seats, windshield or doors yet. I don't remember seeing how fast we were going, but it seemed very fast at the time. I took the outside seat, closest to the non-existent door so my sister wouldn't fall out. Last year we found a video of me standing on the freshly redone seats playing with the steering wheel. I guess we all know why Corvettes are in my blood.

Rik

## Pretty Lucky, huh?

The year was 1959 and from where I came from, meaning the other side of the tracks, I never thought I would ever see much less ever own a Corvette.

The richest people in my small town owned a big factory where they employed probably 1/4 of the town's population. Sure enough one day one of the big shots in that factory showed up in our little town with a new green and white Corvette. He was the "Toast of the Town."



That's where my love for Corvette's started. Well nine years later I bought my first Corvette. Not a C1 but a Mid Year. Still have it. ~ Save the Wave ~

Ps The people who own that factory are still Big Corvette Owners, and good friends of ours.

Lucky

## Grandma's 'Vette -

My grandfather (Bop) was a big wig at GM, big enough to scam the first Corvette in California for my grandmother (Mimi) when I was 10 years old. I'd describe it for you, but if you've seen one C1 Corvette you've seen them all. Okay, I'll try: it was white with a red interior, and had the famous Blue-Flame high performance six (three carbs!) with the sensational two speed Powerglide automatic. The coolest thing about the car is that I used to ride to school in it!



We lived in Belmont CA and the weather was usually nice, so the top was usually down. What I remember most that the 'Vette had no outside door handles, so you had to reach inside and pull back on a knob to open the door. It also had no windows, so how the heck you got in when the top was up I've forgotten. All I remember is when it was raining, you had to stick your hand in somewhere, find that knob, and get in without getting the inside wet, or Mimi would.....well, I forgot that part too.

I do remember the floor shift, and the six gauges across the bottom of the dash, the center one being a tachometer (a what?), and the fact it was by far the coolest car on the road, especially since it was the *only* one on the road! And I'm sure you remember what the typical cars in 1953 looked like. They sure didn't look like Mimi's 'Vette!!!

Dave Hill

## The Great Awakening -

**It was the summer before my senior year at Boulder High. Being a good preacher's kid (alright, maybe I did fudge about being good just a, bit), I had never been to a sports car race, didn't turn to look at cool cars driving down the street and had never even swooned over the music of a throaty American V-8. But it was 1960 and I was becoming aware that there was a real difference between boys and girls, and that seemed to be enough for me to work on that summer. One of my buds built false IDs for us so we could sneak into Tulagi's on the hill in Boulder, across from CU. It was the party headquarters of the world, and I needed to check it out. We got caught, but that was OK because I got to meet Mat Rouen, the owner. Didn't know who he was that night, but it was a good set-up. Another of my buds was just discovering sports cars and there was this national championship race coming up at Continental Divide Raceways near Castle Rock, and headed out before sun-up on a beautiful Sunday morning. (I got to skip church for this! Barely...) It was the end of life as I knew it and an awakening to the world of cars - a real transforming day. It was like I was drifting in heaven. A moment looking at a Ferrari Testa Rosa or a Scarab, or a Porsche RS 60 was like eternity. And the day was like a moment. I didn't know who was who but Carol Shelby was driving a Scarab, Jim Hall had a new car called a Chaparral, there were Maserati Birdcages which sung a raspy rhapsody downshifting for the first turn. While the sports-racing cars were certainly the main event, Carol Shelby lapped everyone up to 5<sup>th</sup> place. Only Jim Hall and Shelby's team-mate in the second Scarab escaped watching him drive by again. It was the A, B & C production race that wowed me. That race featured a couple Ferrari 250 GTs, a handful of**

**Lotus Super 7s, some Jaguar XKEs, and a whole bunch of Corvettes! The Ferraris looked great and had a high-reving scream and I expected them to decimate the field. The Lotuses were curious little buggars but with the weight of a feather, they were remarkably quick on the brakes and through the turns. The Jags looked like they were herded more than driven. But the sound of 327s with open pipes and the explosions and**



**flames out the side pipes as they backed off filled my senses. Not knowing we couldn't go into the pits without passes, we wandered around the cars and I bumped into a guy in a driving suit. He looked me in the eye and said, "I just kicked you out of my club last week, didn't I?" It was Mat Rouen. He campaigned a '60 Vette and did pretty well. I ran into him again a few weeks later at the Pikes Peak Hillelimb and he told me to come by the club, ask for him and he'd show me his car. It was in the drive-in basement in the back of his club and I was hooked. Been a fan of the Fiberglass Flock ever since, but am still amazed that I actually own one every time I walk toward my black beauty. I still can't walk away without turning around to look at it. **Bob****

## The practicality of it all —

I think I must have been 13 or so when my Dad and I ran some errands and just happened to stop by the local Chevy dealership in Golden, Colorado. I must preface the remainder of this story by stating that my father was a car guy. He had new cars almost every year for a large part of my childhood – mostly Chevrolets, but then also some Fords. Well the car catching his eye this time was a new Corvette sitting on the showroom floor. I'm pretty sure this was in '63 and remember that it wasn't a Stingray so I guess it must have been a new '62 the dealer was trying to get rid of. I didn't know anything about the horsepower or the price tag, I only saw an amazingly beautiful white convertible with red interior and it was so COOL! So we drove that that car off the showroom floor to our house to make the pitch to my Mom. It was a short-lived excursion. My mother firmly stood her ground using the argument that it just wasn't practical – we were a family of four and this car would only hold two. Not practical at all – the firm answer was "No". So my father dejectedly drove it back to the dealership. I was so angry at her, that I don't think I talked to her for a month. It

still is something that I remind her of from time to time – she scarred me for life! Little did I know that there would come a day when having a Corvette would be a reality. Not only was it practical, it still was really COOL!

Vicki



## SCCC Completes Community Service for April

By Dennis Clark

Even with snow and rain forecast, temperatures in the low 40's and a few snow flakes falling, ten members of the SCCC came out on Sunday May 1<sup>st</sup> to clean up the trash along Northern Avenue. The ten in attendance were Vicki, Kevin, Gary, Madelyn, Lucky, Jannett, Joe, Mary, Dennis, and Patty. The group donned the new orange club T-shirts and hats.....WOW are they bright.....they may cause car accidents as drivers may be blinded....but the group did get several honks from cars going by.....we think to say thanks for making a difference in our community.

There were several interesting things found during the clean up. I thought it might make for some fun to create a story using the items we found.....they will be underlined for your easy identification.....here goes....

Amanda was adorned in nothing but her red feather boa as she lay back on her sofa sipping thru a straw from a vodka bottle. She checked her Saturday night lotto ticket and discovered that she had won a \$100 bill. Of course this made her very happy as she waited for her boyfriend to arrive. In a few minutes James knocked on the door. Amanda called to him to enter. James entered the room and had presented Amanda a bouquet of red artificial flowers. Of course there was no need to put them in water so he put them in an empty tequila bottle. James liked to chew so he opened his can of Skoal and took a pinch and put it in his mouth. Now Amanda only wearing her red feather boa had amorous inclinations and she was soon to convince James that they should retire to the bedroom. But first she insisted that he would have to use two plastic floss picks to clean the chew from his teeth.

It was an hour or so later when the phone rang. It was Amanda's sister who was on her way over to visit. James and Amanda took a quick glance around the bedroom. They saw several broken beer bottles, a broken Coca Cola bottle, a used condom, an unused condom, and three cigarette lighters. They decided to quickly clean up the room when the doorbell started ringing. James thought that he would just toss the items out the window, but when he started to open the bedroom window it was stuck. He found a screw driver on the night stand and was able to pry open the window to toss out the cleaned up items, but when he looked out the window he saw a dead robin. He was startled and almost couldn't toss out the items. As this was going on Amanda quickly got dressed and answered the door.

At the door was Amanda's sister, Katy. Katy had brought along her young daughter Susie. Susie was carrying her baby doll that was wearing a pink baby doll bib. Katy and her daughter Susie had been on the road all day long so she immediately asked Amanda if she could put three soiled disposable diapers and a half eaten apple in the trash. Amanda had a gift for her niece it was a beautiful plastic white Hawaiian lei. Susie had also brought a gift for Buzz, Amanda's dog. It was a rawhide chew bone that Buzz really enjoyed.

The two sisters sat around and sipped through straws on a bottle of rum and a bottle of whiskey. They each pulled out a dollar bill and played a game of liar's poker. As the two sisters drank and played poker Susie tossed three tennis balls and two blue rubber balls to Buzz. James was using a 5/16 inch wrench to tighten up some loose nuts on a table leg. Afterwards, as music played in the background, James played the spoons in accompaniment. He used a large metal spoon and two large plastic spoons. As all of this was going on Susie exclaimed....look mommy I found a lucky penny!

As you can tell from all of the underlined items there were lots of strange and interesting things found on our clean up, including a \$100 bill. You will definitely not want to miss the next clean up!



*Fun In The Sun Car Show!*



**May 7<sup>th</sup> 2011**

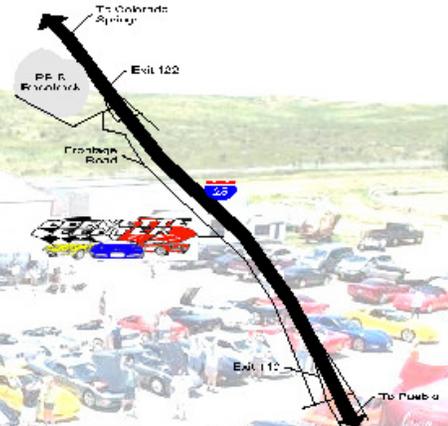
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Event Location: Corvette Center  
18510 Midway Ranch Rd.  
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Car Show NCCC Sanction# RM-183-004  
Date: May 7th 2011 Cost \$20  
On Site Registration Opens-8:00 am Closes-10:00 am  
Judging Starts-10:00

Chairperson: Susan Umland 719•597-2904 6830 Battle Mountain Rd. COS CO 80922  
Governor: Don Adametz 719•390-5034 4028 Breaking Dawn St. COC CO 80925  
Chief Judge: Nick Renfro 719•578•9966

**Sonic Night -Friday, May 13<sup>th</sup>, 6:00 PM at the Sonic on Santa Fe. We will stay there and have some fun without the travel!!!**

Trip to the Holy Land (known by metal car people as Bowling Green, KY)  
We'll leave on Sunday, May 22<sup>nd</sup> and return on Saturday, May 28<sup>th</sup>. For details contact Lucky, but by now those going know all they need to know. Right?



**Corvette Show & Shine**  
 Sponsored by  
 The Southern Colorado Corvette Club  
 At The Southern Colorado Gaming and  
 Event Center



Saturday June 4, 2011

Time: 7:00 am to 3:00 pm. Registration: 7:00 am to 9:00 am. Award Ceremony: 3:00 pm.

Driver's Meeting: 9:30 am Entry Fee: \$15.00 for the first car and \$10 for each additional car.

People's Choice Awards: Trophies and door prizes. Judging: 10:00 am – 1:00 pm

Classes: C-1, C-2, C-3, C-4, C-5, C6, Z06, ZR1 and Custom

Concessions: Breakfast (8:00 am to 11:00 am) and Lunch and Drinks available on premises.

**No admission charge to the general public.**

The Corvette Show is part of a 3 in 1 show including the Southern Colorado Mustang Club and the Southern Colorado Mopar club.

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